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	INR-00	INSE-00	IO-00	L-00	CAC-00	MOFM-00	MOF-00
	M-00	VCIE-00	NEA-00	DCP-00	NRC-00	NSAE-00	ISN-00
	OCS-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00	PA-00	PM-00	GIWI-00	PRS-00
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 TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PK](#)
 SUBJECT: MODERATE ISLAMIC LEADERS IN PUNJAB LOOK TO U.S. FOR GUIDANCE
 AND MONEY

CLASSIFIED BY: Bryan Hunt, Principal Officer, Consulate Lahore,
 U.S. Department of State.
 REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: Although historically divided by sometimes violent sectarian differences, Punjab's Islamic religious leaders have found common cause in recent years in pressing for a moderate alternative to the Taliban-style Islam increasing in Pakistan's Pashtun areas. While infiltration by well-funded radical madrassas and clerics has occurred, particularly in southern and western areas of the province, the province's premier religious institutions and clerics from all sects -- Brailvi, Deobandi, Ahl-e-Hadith, and Shi'a -- are in general agreement to oppose Taliban-style Islam and are open to engagement with and eager for funding from the United States. In a religious environment in which the ability to distribute patronage in the form of "charity" is directly tied to influence, moderate clerics are slowly but steadily losing ground to their oftentimes better funded radical counterparts. End Summary.

Brailvi Communities

12. (C) Punjab's Brailvi community can be broadly divided into two categories: the Ulema -- who serve in mosques as prayer leaders and sermon givers -- and the Pirs -- Sufi spiritual leaders often believed to have mystic powers who generally dispense advice, guidance, and charity through the province's extensive network of shrines. While extreme sectarian chauvenism based on religious dogma and tradition can and does exist among certain segments of the Brailvi Ulema, even these most extreme sectarians have no tradition of forcible imposition of their narrowly construed religious beliefs/traditions on others in society and rarely engage in violence -- Sunni Tehrik being the notable exception. Among the Brailvi Pirs, sectarian and religious bigotry is virtually unknown, and many Pirs have followers from multiple sects and even in a few cases from other religions. The general philosophy of the Pirs is to promote harmonious existence among diverse communities through focusing on spiritual enlightenment and community service. Where Pirs have engaged in violence, it has generally been intra-familial strife over which heir was to inherit the mantel of authority (and finances) after a Pir's death.

13. (C) The Brailvi Ulema are well organized in the religious movement Jamaat Ahl-e-Sunnat, which has a clear elected leadership and hierarchy structure. This social organization (which also has aims

of eventually becoming a viable political party) tends to focus on the promotion of Brailvi religious ideology, lobbying for Brailvi inclusion in provincial and federal religious bodies, and occasional pressure campaigns/demonstrations calling on the government to counter Deobandi/Ahl-e-Hadith influence (today often referred to as Talibanization). Jamaat Ahl-e-Sunnat has ties with both the Pakistan Peoples Party in Sindh and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz in the Punjab. The attempt to form a separate Brailvi political party under the late Mufti Noorani, Jamaat Ulema Pakistan (JUP), largely failed. Even before Noorani's death, several Brailvi Alim split from the party to form their own factions. Noorani's decision to take the JUP into the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) religious alliance undercut much of its credibility. While JUP still has a handful of elected representatives in both Sindh and Punjab, its influence in the Brailvi community is minimal.

¶4. (C) The Tanzeem-ul-Madaras, the Brailvi madrassas board, is the Jamaat Ahl-e-Sunnat's primary challenger for organized influence among the Brailvi Ulema. The Tanzeem-ul-Madaras is, in the Punjab, dominated by Sarfraz Naeemi, head of Lahore's largest and best financed madrassa Jamia Naeemia. Sarfraz Naeemi is a conservative Brailvi with traditionally strong anti-Western views and little tolerance for non-Brailvi Islamic leaders. His supporters were largely responsible for the violence that accompanied the Danish cartoon riots in Lahore in February 2006. Naeemi has close political ties to the Sharif brothers, having served as their personnel cleric, and the Sharif family is believed to remain his primary financial patron. While Naeemi's checkered past makes him a difficult ally, he has been outspoken against Talibanization and is in the leadership of civil society's anti-Taliban movement in the Punjab.

¶5. (C) As a response to the Deobandi extremist group Sipah-e-Sahaba's (SSP's) forcible occupation of Brailvi mosques in Karachi and SSP's assassination of Brailvi clerics, a group of radical Brailvi Ulema formed the militant organization Sunni Tehrik. Sunni Tehrik had as its principal objective the use of violence, including targeted assassination, to "defend" the Brailvi community from Deobandi advances. At its height, Sunni Tehrik was most powerful in Karachi and Hyderabad with lesser but nonetheless significant influence in the Punjab. Its growing influence in urban Sindh ultimately brought it into open and often violent conflict with the secular Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM). Sunni Tehrik's senior leadership was devastated in a 2005 bomb attack in Karachi during which most of its senior leaders were murdered. The organization has only partly recovered, and although it has not formally eschewed violence, it has also not actively targeted Deobandis in recent years. Despite statements from Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi, post does not consider Sunni Tehrik an appropriate entity with which to engage against the Taliban due to its previous history of terrorism and its waning influence in the broader Brailvi community.

¶6. (C) The Pirs are a divisive group with only a minimally clear hierarchy and competing personal religious and political agendas. Cooperation among them is limited as each Pir views the other as a potential competitor for followers, money, and influence. Three of the four Sufi schools of thought have a clear living heir to their South Asian founder, who is generally accorded slightly hire status than other Pirs of the same school of thought -- Makhdoom Iftikhar Gilani of the Qadriya school (a PML member of the Provincial Assembly from Uch Sharif), Makhdoom Chishti of the Chishtia school (based in Pak Pattan and affiliated with the PML-N), and Makhdoom Zamrud Bokhari of the Naqshbandia school (custodian of the Jalal-ud-Din Bokhari Surkh Posh Shrine in Uch Sharif and largely apolitical). The fourth, the Suhrwardiya school ostensibly headed by Foreign Minister Qureshi, is divided as to whether or not Makhdoom Qureshi is the rightful heir. Attempts to unite the Pirs through the Jamaat Ahl-e-Mushaikh organization, headed by Pir Fazl-e-Haq of Faisalabad, have been only marginally successful.

¶7. (C) The Pirs traditionally exercised influence and gained followers through the provision of social services (free food, medical camps, free lodging) at their shrines. These good works were financed by the wealthier of their followers who made regular donations to the Pir and/or the shrine in order to obtain God's favor. A handful of the Pirs were also gifted with substantial tracts of agricultural land, held in the name of the shrine, which continue to provide them and their families with an income today.

A proliferation of descendants, the creation of numerous small shrines, and disputes over inheritance of the shrines has weakened the current generation of Pirs and divided the financial base of their followers into smaller and smaller units. The decision by the government to take over the administration of the shrines and collection of donations to the shrines through the Auqaf Department has taken away a significant portion of the Pirs' incomes. Charitable activities through larger shrines and by more prominent Pirs still occur but on a far smaller scale than in the past. Many of the less prominent Pirs have completely sacrificed this portion of their spiritual inheritance.

The Shi'a

¶8. (C) Like the Brailvi, the Shi'a are divided into two primary groups -- the Ulema and the Pirs. Much of what hold true for the Brailvi Pirs holds equally true for their Shi'a counterparts. The one notable exception is that most of the Shi'a Pirs have effectively abandoned their religious role and have become traditional feudal landlords, leaving the Shi'a Ulema to dominate this religious sect. The Shi'a Ulema, however, unlike their Brailvi counterparts have no overriding structure. The Shi'a political party, Tehreek-e-Islami-Pakistan and its madrassa board are disparate organizations, although as a whole, the Shi'a are united in their vigorous opposition to the Taliban and can play a crucial role in the anti-Taliban movement. Dealing with the Shi'a Ulema on an individual basis, however, is essential for success.

¶9. (C) A comparatively small number of Shi'a Ulema are heavily influenced by Iran and take a strong anti-Western orientation. These Ulema have been the primary ideological backers of the now largely defunct terrorist group Sipah-e-Mohammad and the radical, sometimes violent student group, the Imamia Students Organization. The majority of the Shi'a Ulema, even if they receive funds from Iran or Iranian backed groups, are largely independent and equally critical of Iran and the West.

Deobandi

¶10. (C) While the Deobandi sectarian ideology is largely responsible for the birth of the Taliban, there are a small but influential number of moderate Punjabi Deobandi leaders, who are opposed to the radicalization that has occurred within their Islamic sect. These Deobandi leaders, while conservative in their personal beliefs and behaviors, reject the notion of imposition of their ideology by force, believe in participation in the democratic process, and see considerable value both in intra-faith and inter-faith dialogue. Some even go so far as to claim themselves hereditary Pirs in an attempt to link themselves to more moderate Sufi traditions. These moderate Deobandi draw their inspiration from Deobandi leaders in India, who have largely rejected the concept of violent armed struggle. In recent weeks, many of these moderate Deobandi leaders have spoken out against the Taliban.

¶11. (C) The center of moderate Deobandi thought in the Punjab is in Lahore at the Jamia Ashrafia and the Badshahi Mosque. Both of these institutions and their leaders -- Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad and Maulana Fazl-ur-Rahim -- have long-standing links to Deobandi groups in India, have condemned vigorously extremism and terrorism, and have shown a willingness to work with the USG to promote a more tolerant form of Deobandi Islam. Given their influence in Deobandi circles, owing largely to the prestige of their institutions and forefathers, these leaders are well-positioned to moderate Deobandi statements, thought, and actions. Although they have no influence over the Taliban, these Punjabi Deobandi leaders are willing to press their co-religionists to adopt a harder anti-Taliban stance through the Wafaq-ul-Madaris al-Arabiya, the Deobandi madrassa board in which they have a partial ally in Secretary General Qari Hanif Jalandhry.

Ahl-e-Hadith

¶12. (C) The Ahl-e-Hadith are generally seen as the most radical of Pakistan's Islamic sects, drawing their inspiration from Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi school of thought. The community, however, is a fractured one between violent extremists who are linked to Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, and as such derive considerable funding from

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, and their more moderate but less well-financed opponents. The opposition to Lashkar-e-Tayyaba in the Punjab is split between three personality-driven Ahl-e-Hadith organizations, the Markazi Jamaat Ahl-e-Hadith, the Jammāt Ahl-e-Hadith Ropri of Abdul Wahab Ropri, and the Jamiat Ulema Ahl-e-Hadith of Qazi Abdul Qadir Khamosh.

¶13. (C) The most influential of these three groupings, thanks to a recent merger is the Markazi Jamaat Ahl-e-Hadith jointly headed by Allama Sajid Mir and Allama Hafiz Zubair Ahmed Zaheer. Both of these leaders have already issued strongly worded statements against the Taliban. While Allama Sajid Mir is a very recent, and it would seem opportunistic, champion of moderation, Allama Zaheer has a long-standing, positive relationship with the USG. Given their combined influence in religious circles, engagement through the Markazi Jamaat Ahl-e-Hadith is the most effective way to reach moderate Ahl-e-Hadith leaders.

Financing is the Key

¶14. (C) The one unifying factor between these various moderate groupings is a severe lack of financing in comparison to their radical counterparts. The proliferation of madrassas and "charitable" activities linked to extremist clerics in southern and western Punjab is a direct challenge to the on-the-ground influence of moderates. These extremist clerics, who continue to receive regular infusions of cash from backers in Saudi Arabia and Gulf states, are able to use patronage to increase their followers and their influence in erstwhile moderate strongholds. For moderates to stem effectively this growing tide of radicalization, they will need access to greater cash reserves than are currently available to them. These groups all welcome engagement with the USG, and believe that association with and financial support from the United States will increase rather than undercut their influence. All moderate clerics consistently highlight the need for financial assistance.

¶15. (C) Post is planning several outreach efforts to this community and will explore possible strategic communication programs to engage moderate voices.

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